

A Cable Arranging Construction

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to a construction for arranging cables in a cable guide, and particularly to a cable arranging construction between a vehicle body and a slide door.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

[0002] U. S. Patent No. 6,174,020 discloses a construction that looks like part of a caterpillar tread for arranging ordinary cables of a substantially round cross-section. Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. 2002-233026, Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. 2002-17032, Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. H10-936 and Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. 2000-50472 disclose other known constructions for arranging cables.

[0003] A larger number of the cables leads to an increase in the number of the cables in the cable guide. Thus, a minimum bend radius of a possible bending deformation of a cable bundle is increased due to the increased number of the cables, thereby reducing a degree of freedom in the bending deformation of the cable guide. Further, the weight and the cross section of the

cable bundle increase as the number of the cables increases. Thus, a cable arranging assembly using the cable guide becomes heavier and larger.

[0004] Accordingly, an object of the invention is to provide a cable arranging construction in which a cable arranging assembly using a cable guide has more freedom of bending deformation and can be made lighter and smaller.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The invention relates to a construction for arranging cables by inserting the cables into a cable guide. The construction comprises substantially tubular links coupled to undergo a bending deformation substantially in a plane. At least some of the cables inserted into the cable guide are flexible flat cables, each of which has conductors arranged substantially side by side.

[0006] Flexible flat cables placed one over another are lighter, cross-sectionally smaller and more flexible than a bundle of ordinary cables with the same number of conductors. Thus, the cable arranging assembly using the cable guide can have more freedom in bending deformation and can be lighter and smaller than the prior art construction where all cables in the cable guide have a round cross-section. As a result, there can be more cables without reducing the freedom of bending deformation of the cable arranging assembly while the weight and cross-sectional size of the assembly are suppressed.

[0007] Flat cables placed one over another can be bent with a smaller force as compared to a bundle of the ordinary cables. Thus, the cable guide can flexibly undergo a bending deformation with a smaller force.

[0008] The flat cables preferably are arranged in the cable guide so that a thickness direction substantially parallels a bending direction of the cable guide.

[0009] A partition may divide an inner space of each link into a first accommodating portion for inserting ordinary cables and a second accommodating portion for inserting the flat cables.

[0010] All of the cables to be inserted into the cable guide may be flat cables.

[0011] A sidewall of each link preferably has a slit for inserting the flat cable into the inner space of the linking member. The inner space preferably has a cable introducing portion and a cable holding portion. The cable holding portion preferably is at least as wide as the flat cables. However, the cable-introducing portion preferably is narrower than the flat cables.

[0012] The cable arranging construction may be adapted for arranging the cables between a vehicle body and a slide door.

[0013] These and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading of the following detailed description of preferred embodiments and accompanying drawings. It should be understood that even though embodiments are separately described, single features thereof may be combined to additional embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. 1 is a diagram showing a cable arranging construction according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0015] FIG. 2 is a diagram showing a construction of a cable guide.

[0016] FIG. 3 is a diagram showing the construction of the cable guide.

[0017] FIG. 4 is a section of a flat cable.

[0018] FIG. 5 shows flat cables placed one over another and bent.

[0019] FIG. 6 is a diagram showing a bundle of bent ordinary cables is bent.

[0020] FIG. 7 is a diagram showing an application example of the cable arranging construction of FIG. 1.

[0021] FIG. 8 is a diagram showing a modification of the cable arranging construction of FIG. 1.

[0022] FIG. 9 is a diagram showing another modification of the cable arranging construction of FIG. 1.

[0023] FIG. 10 is a diagram showing still another modification of the cable arranging construction of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0024] A cable arranging construction according to the invention includes a cable guide 1 that resembles part of a caterpillar tread, as shown in FIGS. 1 to 3. The cable guide 1 is configured to receive a cable bundle 3 and a plurality of flat cables 5 placed substantially one over another. The cable bundle 3 comprises of a plurality of ordinary cables 3a (see FIG. 6) having a substantially round cross section. The ordinary cables 3a are likely to be power-supplying wires that require a specified capacity, whereas the flat cables 5 are likely to be signal wires that do not require a capacity. Alternatively, a single large cable 3a may be inserted into the cable guide instead of the cable bundle 3.

[0025] The cable guide 1 is formed by coupling links 11 to undergo a bending deformation substantially in a plane. Each link 11 has a trunk 13, two projections 15 at one end of the trunk 13, and two receiving holes 17 at the other end of the trunk 13. The receiving holes 17 are configured to pivotally receive the projections 15 of the mating link 11. The trunk 13 is a substantially

rectangular tube, and has an inside dimensions to receive the cable bundle 3 and the flat cables 5.

[0026] As shown in FIG. 4, the flat cable 5 is a thin flexible strip with conductors 21 of a flat rectangular cross section arranged substantially side by side. The conductors 21 are held between two insulation films 23. The flat cable 5 is thin and sufficiently flexible to undergo a bending deformation. Minimum bend radii R_1 , R_2 of possible bending deformations of the flat cables 5 and the cable bundle 3 are shown for comparison in FIGS. 5 and 6. The flat cables 5 are cross-sectionally smaller, lighter and capable of bending to a smaller bend radius R_1 than the bundle 3 of the ordinary cables 3a having the same number of conductors, even when the flat cables 5 are placed one over another.

[0027] The flat cables 5 are inserted substantially one over another into the cable guide 1 together with the cable bundle 3 so that a thickness direction TD of the flat cables 5 is substantially parallel with a bending direction of the cable guide 1. In this regard, the thickness direction TD of the flat cables 5 is a direction in which the flat cables 5 are easily bendable, and is substantially perpendicular to the axis of rotation or pivotal movement AR defined by the projections 15 and receiving portions 17.

[0028] The cable arranging construction can be applied between a fixed first structure (e.g. vehicle body) 31 and a second structure (e.g. slide door) 33 slidably provided on the first structure 31, as shown in FIG. 7. Thus, opposite ends of the cable guide 1 are coupled to both structures 31, 33 and the bent

states of the cable guide 1, the cable bundle 3 and the flat cables 5 inserted into the cable guide 1 change as the second structure 33 moves.

[0029] Some of the cables inserted into the cable guide 1 are flat cables 5. Thus, a cable arranging assembly using the cable guide 1 has a higher degree of freedom of bending deformation and is lighter and smaller as compared to the prior art where all cables in the cable guide 1 are ordinary cables 3 with a substantially round cross section. The width W of the cable guide 1 along the bending direction of the cable guide 1 is reduced significantly. As a result, the number of the cables can be increased without reducing the degree of freedom in the bending deformation of the cable arranging assembly while the weight and the cross-sectional size of the cable arranging assembly are suppressed.

[0030] The flat cables 5 placed substantially one over another can be bent with a smaller force as compared to the cable bundle 3. Thus, the cable guide 5 can flexibly undergo a bending deformation with a smaller force. For example, the second structure 33 of FIG. 7 can be slid with a smaller driving force (door sliding force) because a load exerted on the structure 33 by the cable guide 1 having the flat cables 5 therein is low.

[0031] FIG. 8 shows an alternate embodiment where a partition 41 divides an inner space of the trunk 13 of each link 11 of the cable guide 1 into a first accommodating portion 43 for the ordinary cables 3 and a second accommodating portion 45 for the flat cables 5. Thus, mutual interference (e.g. abrasion) of the ordinary cables 3a and the flat cables 5 in the cable guide 1 is prevented.

[0032] FIG. 9 shows an embodiment where all of the cables inserted into the cable guide 1 are flat cables 5. In this case, the degree of freedom in the bending deformation, the weight, the cross section and the like are improved further. Additionally, the width W of the cable guide 1 can be reduced to half or smaller as compared to the case where only the ordinary cables 3a are used.

[0033] FIG. 10 shows an embodiment where all of the cables inserted into the cable guide 1 are flat cables 5, and a side wall (one of two side walls facing each other along the bending direction of the cable guide 1) of the trunk 13 of each link 11 of the cable guide 1 has a slit 51 for inserting the flat cable 5 into the inner space of the trunk 13. The inner space of the trunk 13 becomes gradually wider at an intermediate portion when viewed from the slit 51. A front part of the inner space, when viewed from the slit 51, defines a cable-introducing portion 53, and a rear part of the inner space defines a cable holding portion 55. The cable holding portion 55 is at least as wide as the flat cables 5, whereas the cable-introducing portion 53 is narrower than the flat cables 5. Thus, the flat cable 5 inserted into the cable holding portion 55 through the slit 51 and the cable-introducing portion 53 can be held stably in the cable holding portion 55. This embodiment achieves the same effects as the embodiment shown in FIG. 9, and the flat cables 5 can be inserted easily into the cable guide 1 through the slits 51 in the links 11.

[0034] As described above, at least some of the cables inserted into the cable guide 1 are flexible flat cables 5. The flat cables 5 undergo a bending deformation more flexibly and at a smaller bend radius R1 than a cable bundle 3 of ordinary cables 3a having the same number of conductors, even when the

flat cables 5 are placed one over another. Additionally, the flexible flat cables 5 are lighter and have a smaller cross section than a cable bundle 3 of ordinary cables 3a having the same number of conductors. Thus, the cable arranging assembly using the cable guide 1 has a degree of freedom in the bending deformation and can be made lighter and smaller as compared to a case where all the cables to be inserted into the cable guide are ordinary cables having a substantially round cross section, as in the prior art. As a result, the number of cables can be increased without reducing the degree of freedom in the bending deformation of the cable arranging assembly while the weight and the cross-sectional size of the cable arranging assembly are suppressed.

[0035] The flat cables 5 placed one over another can be bent with a smaller force as compared to the cable bundle 3 of the ordinary cables 3a. Thus, the cable guide 1 can flexibly undergo a bending deformation with a smaller force.

[0036] The inner space of each link 11 of the cable guide 1 can be divided by the partition into the first accommodating portion 43 for the ordinary cables 3 having a substantially round cross section and the second accommodating portion 45 for the flat cables 5. Thus, mutual interference (e.g. abrasion) of the ordinary cables 3a and the flat cables 5 in the cable guide 1 is prevented.

[0037] All of the cables inserted into the cable guide 1 preferably are flat cables 5. Thus, the cable arranging assembly can be improved further in terms of the degree of freedom in the bending deformation, the weight, the cross-sectional size and the like.

[0038] The sidewall of each link 11 preferably is formed with the slit 51 for inserting the flat cables 5. Thus, the flat cables 5 can be inserted easily into the cable guide 1.